

## A Christmas Surprise by DefinitelyYou

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** I love this odd little family, holiday fluff, just a fun little drabble

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler

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**Summary:**

Jonathan looks around at the crew gathered in the lobby and is amazed by what he sees. The last time he was with this same group of people the world was about to end. And tonight, here they are all together with stocking caps and scarfs instead of bats and guns anticipating a silly holiday movie instead of battling monsters from another dimension. He can't help but let himself be overcome with gratitude.

## A Christmas Surprise

### Author's Note:

The idea for this little drabble hit me this morning, and I couldn't shake it. Happy holidays to all!

"I said two for *Beverly Hills Cop*, please?"

"Oh, yeah, sorry," Jonathan says as he processes two tickets to the day's most popular movie and gives the annoyed couple back their change. Nearly two straight hours working the ticket counter is starting to take its toll, and his mind has started to wander at even the shortest of breaks in the rush.

Jonathan has been at work since noon, just in time for the Christmas day rush to begin. It has been non-stop since he walked in the door. Luckily, he managed to get out of theater clean-up duty by filling in for a co-worker in the ticket booth who went home sick—for as much as he dislikes most interactions with strangers, he'd much rather sell tickets to them than clean up after them.

He glances over at the clock, which reads just after eight, and realizes that only hour had passed since he last checked. This is one of the busiest Christmases he's worked, which helps the time pass more quickly. But he still has two hours left to go on his shift, and all he wants to do is go home and spend some time with his family. It doesn't help that he hadn't gotten much sleep last night. He had fallen asleep at the Wheelers watching *It's a Wonderful Life* and woke up after midnight. He hadn't wanted to leave—Nancy was draped across his lap, sound asleep. The lights of the Christmas tree gave her a particularly beautiful glow, and he would have been content to stay there all night with her in his arms. But he only had a few hours with his mom and Will in the morning before he needed to head to work, and he didn't want to miss Christmas morning with his family. So he carried Nancy up to her room. She groggily kissed him good night, and he left her with a promise to call her once he got off work tonight.

He still can't quite believe the turn his life has taken in the last year,

particularly the last month. Out of all the horror his family and friends have experienced, he somehow managed to find some happiness, even love, with Nancy. His life has been anything but ideal up until this point, and he recognizes just how lucky he is to have both his family intact and a girlfriend as amazing and strong as Nancy Wheeler. The thought of talking to her in a couple of hours is enough to keep him going, not matter how annoying the public may be.

He sells a few more tickets to the latecomers to the eight o'clock show before the traditional lull between evening movies sets in. Jonathan takes a few minutes to clean up the ticket booth, organizing his change drawer and picking up the debris that has accumulated throughout the day. And he allows his thoughts to drift back to Nancy, thinking about tomorrow when they plan to exchange their Christmas gifts. They had decided to wait until after the holiday so that they could actually spend some time alone without any family or work obligations. And he hopes that they can truly be alone for the first time in at least a week. He misses the sound she makes when he kisses her neck just below her right ear and how good it feels when she wraps her arms around his neck and pulls him close . . .

"Excuse me?"

Dammit, Jonathan thinks, he let himself space out again.

"Can I help you," he says not looking up but moving over to the cash register instead.

"Ten tickets to *A Christmas Story* please," a soft and slightly familiar voice says through the window.

"That'll be \$35," he says finally looking up. He's greeted by a sea of familiar faces all wearing various forms of Santa hats and other holiday garb and grinning from ear to ear. Nancy, Will, and his mom are standing immediately in front of the window wearing the biggest smiles of the group. Mike, Dustin, Lucas, Max, and El (or someone he thinks must be El even though he can't see her face clearly due to the giant scarf and hat covering everything but her eyes) are immediately behind them, with Hopper and Steve, who looks a bit uncomfortable despite his smile, making up the rear of the group.

They all look so ridiculous that he can't help but return their goofy grins with one of his own. "What's going on," he asks, narrowing his eyes.

"We're here to see a movie," Nancy chimes in.

"All of you?" he asks, his initial cheer fading to suspicion.

"Yeah," Will chimes in. "We figured that if you couldn't be with us at home, we could spend some time with you here."

Nancy and his mom nod along with Will's story.

"All of you?"

"Well, we didn't originally expect everyone to come along, but, you know, the more the merrier," Nancy says flashing him one of her sly smiles.

"You do know that I still have to work, right? I can't watch the movie with you," he says trying to figure out what's really going on.

"Don't worry about that, Jonathan. I've got you covered," his boss, Mr. Schneider, says as he walks into the ticket booth. "Your mom called me earlier to see if could let you go early. She can be quite convincing, you know," he says laughing.

"But I have two more hours in my shift," Jonathan protests.

"I know, but you've also been here longer than anyone else today, and you picked up an extra shift to help us out of a bind earlier in the week. Think of it as a Christmas gift, Jonathan. You deserve it," Mr. Schneider adds, patting him on the back. "Now, hand over your vest and go enjoy your family and friends."

Mr. Schneider's announcement is greeted with cheers from the festive group, making Jonathan blush at the attention he's receiving. But he does what he's told, hands over his vest to his boss and walks out the ticket booth. Nancy and Will are waiting for him with a Santa hat and a gigantic red scarf that he guesses must be from the Wheelers. Before he can protest, they've managed to adorn him with holiday gear of his own and have guided him over to the group, which is now

gathered by the concession stand.

“Looking good, Jonathan,” Hopper says with a smirk.

“Not as good as you,” he returns with a smirk of his own. Hopper lets out a single guffaw in response, jingling the bells that ring the Santa hat sitting askew on his head.

Jonathan looks around at the crew gathered in the lobby and is amazed by what he sees. The last time he was with this same group of people the world was about to end. And tonight, here they are all together with stocking caps and scarfs instead of bats and guns anticipating a silly holiday movie instead of battling monsters from another dimension. He can’t help but let himself be overcome with gratitude. Looking over at Nancy, he asks, “Was this your idea?”

“Yes and no,” she says. “I wanted to see you today, so I called your mom to see if she and Will wanted to go see *A Christmas Story* with me tonight.”

“And then I thought it might be nice to see if Hopper and El would like to come along,” Will chimed in. “And Hopper actually said yes.”

“Hey, watch it, kid,” Hopper says jokingly, rubbing Will’s hair.

Nancy picks the story back up, saying “once Mike found out El was going, he decided that he had to join us. Then Lucas somehow found out, and well, the entire Party wound up coming along.”

“And Steve?” Jonathan asks, looking over at his possible friend, who has remained on the edge of the group.

“Well, he is part of the Upside Down Gang,” Dustin pipes up.

“The what?” everyone asks in unison.

“You know like the Scooby Gang,” Dustin starts. “We all make a pretty good team, so I figured we deserved a name like the kids in Scooby Doo. And I liked the sound of The Upside Down Gang . . .” Dustin trails off getting more self-conscious.

“You know, kid, I actually like it,” Hopper says smiling.

“Me, too,” pipe in Will and El at the same time, making Dustin beam with pride.

“Thanks for coming, Steve,” Jonathan says above the din of the kids chattering among themselves, and he truly means it. Somehow Steve seems to belong to this odd grouping of individuals, despite their less than ideal history.

“Yeah, I can’t seem to get rid of these kids, no matter how hard I try,” Steve says with a grin, adding, “besides, it sounded like fun.”

“Okay, the movie is going to start soon. Let’s grab some snacks and head into the theater,” Joyce says loudly, shooing everyone toward the concession stand.

Jonathan hangs back from the others and watches the scene unfold. “You want your camera, don’t you?” Nancy asks putting her arm through his.

“Yeah, I do,” he says, looking down at her with a smile. “It’s just so unexpected and . . . festive. Thank you,” he says.

“You’re welcome,” she says leaning up and kissing him on the cheek.

The group heads into the theater in a mad rush of red and green, settling into a random grouping of kids and teens and adults. Jonathan and Nancy sit towards the back with a row of seats separating them from the main group.

“So what were you thinking about when we arrived?” Nancy asks him.

“What do you mean?”

“You had a dreamy look on your face,” she says.

“I was thinking about you,” he says matter-of-factly. “And then you showed up.”

“Me, huh?”

“Yep.”

“Anything in particular?” she asks squeezing his thigh.

“Maybe,” he says wrapping his arm around her and pulling her close. She settles into his side and lets out a contented sigh.

“Happy?” he asks.

“Very. You?”

“Yeah, yeah, I am,” he says feeling truly happy and content for the first time in a long while.

“Merry Christmas, Jonathan,” Nancy says softly.

“Merry Christmas, Nancy,” he whispers into her ear. He then cups her cheek, bringing them face to face, and kisses her gently, a silent promise of gifts to come.